



Accountability Matters

Seven months after beauty companies vowed to step up diversity and inclusivity efforts in the wake of the social justice movement, Beauty Inc looks at what firms have done so far. For more, see pages 7 and 8. *PLUS: Esi Eggleston Bracey on the CROWN Coalition and a spotlight on Black gaming influencers.*

ILLUSTRATION BY CAMILA GRAY

Beauty Bulletin



Diverse brand campaigns garner higher engagement and conversion, according to reports from Eyecue and MagicLinks.

Report: Beauty Brands Returned to Posting Darker Skin Tones Over Holidays

• **Data from Eyecue and MagicLinks** suggests that racially inclusive influencer campaigns perform better, with Black influencers garnering a particularly high engagement and conversion rate.

Following a spike in Instagram posts featuring darker skin tones, and a steep regression that suggested the initial increase was performative, beauty brands returned to posting darker skin tones on their feeds throughout the holiday season, a new report from Eyecue found.

Presence of dark skin tones in images grew by 25 percent over the holidays in comparison to 2019, according to Eyecue's report. That growth was still less than the significant increase that came in June 2020, though it is higher than the subsequent regression in October. The trajectory suggests that "brands (re)focus on inclusion and diversity when planning content for key times of the year," Eyecue wrote in its report.

The largest increase in content

diversity came from influencer- and user-generated content, with medium or dark skin tones accounting for two-thirds of this content during the 2020 holiday season – up from half in 2019.

Eyecue applied its artificial intelligence technology capabilities to analyze more than 170,000 images from more than 80 beauty brands over the course of 2018 through December 2020 for its newest report. The company identified at least one skin tone on 65,000 portrait and closeup images, accounting for nearly 40 percent of all of the content.

The report was created in tandem with one from influencer marketing agency MagicLinks, whose diversity, equity and inclusion team recently implemented a 30 percent minimum requirement for racial diversity of talent in all campaigns. In its report, the agency found brands that incorporated greater racial diversity in their holiday campaigns saw better performance.

"With instituting this 30 percent

minimum in racial diversity, our team has been able to, in most cases, double that," said Bryan Mirabal, MagicLinks' global creative strategy and diversity, equity and inclusion lead. "It's been great to see from brands that there's interest, there's cooperation."

Andrea Renee was the top-performing influencer in a Sephora campaign run by MagicLinks. Influencers of color garnered a click rate three times higher than the norm in the campaign, which drove an engagement rate 52 percent above goal. Additionally, the view-through rate was 110 percent higher than expected.

In a Giorgio Armani Beauty holiday campaign, Monroe Steele garnered a conversion rate three times higher than her peers', as well as the highest amount of engagement. The campaign drove an engagement rate of 8.5 percent – twice the industry average – and a view-through rate of about 14 percent – four times the industry average. —Alexa Tietjen

By the Numbers: Black-Owned Beauty Businesses On Yelp

Data from Yelp shows heightened interest in Black-owned beauty businesses. BY JAMES MANSO

THE PUSH TO BUY Black isn't just hitting beauty products. Black-owned professional beauty businesses such as nail and hair salons, spas and barbershops have seen a lift in searches on Yelp, in spite of challenges to the professional sector caused by the pandemic.

According to Yelp, searches for Black-owned service businesses skyrocketed 2,400 percent in 2020, and Black-owned businesses saw a 232 percent increase in review mentions.

"We've seen our user show unprecedented interest in Black-owned businesses," said Tara Lewis, senior vice president of community expansion and trends at Yelp.

Although momentum has slowed – a statement from Yelp in August 2020 pointed to a 6,520 percent growth in searches for Black-owned businesses during the summer months – the company credits consistent growth to its own diversity commitments.

"This year, we launched a searchable attribute that gives businesses a way to identify themselves as Black-owned," Lewis said. Here, the top cities and sectors for Black-owned beauty businesses in 2020.

TOP 5 CITIES FOR BLACK-OWNED BEAUTY BUSINESSES

1. ATLANTA
2. ST. LOUIS
3. PHILADELPHIA
4. WASHINGTON, D.C.
5. BALTIMORE

BEAUTY BUSINESSES BY PERCENT GROWTH

1. BARBER SHOPS 1,122 percent
2. HAIR SALONS 499 percent
3. NAIL SALONS 164 percent
4. SPAS 55 percent

Source: Yelp
Time period: Year-over-year, 2019 to 2020.



WINNING CHINA MEANS PLAYING THE LONG GAME

As China's beauty regulations shift, GED helps beauty brands decode the state of play and navigate opportunities to build and scale.

As China eliminates animal testing on many beauty products, ethically minded beauty brands are eyeing the market in a fresh light. Cruelty-free brands, and especially indie brands, have long looked forward to the potential opportunity.

Entering China means connecting with some of the world's most discerning and highly engaged beauty consumers. With the beauty market projected to grow to \$60 billion in 2021 it will be the largest beauty market in the world, according to GED. Though entering China will not be without its challenges as brands navigate cross-border distribution and launch to a broader audience.

For cross-border beauty accelerator, GED, who has worked with brands including Caudalie, GlamGlow, and currently with Dr. Barbara Sturm, RéVive Skincare, Tocca Perfume, T3, and Clark's Botanicals, among others, to bring omnichannel experiences to life in China, commitment to brand building is paramount in the cross-border journey. GED knows that to create a meaningful connection with China's discerning Gen Z and Millennial audience, brands must build awareness by localizing brand DNA and enhancing cultural relevance. Through education and social engagement, GED continues to establish brands' lasting impact and long-term success.

Here, Jean-Philippe Benoist, founder and chief executive officer of GED, talks to WWD about the opportunity in cross-border distribution, de-risking market entry, and how to resonate with China's beauty consumer.

Fairchild Studio: How do you work with brands to know if they are ready to launch in China?



Jean-Philippe Benoist

Jean-Philippe Benoist: Brands must be clear on the strategic vision for their brand in China, and do their internal due diligence around appetite for risk, must-haves from their future partner, growth targets, marketing support, and financial, operational and supply chain readiness.

Brands must understand their target consumer, the products that will resonate and why, and how their brand will be experienced and consumed. At the same time, it is helpful to understand the drivers of brand building – from seeding and organic engagement on social media, selling through social commerce on RED, WeChat and Weibo, and increasingly on Kuaishou, Douyin and Bilibili, and eventually, harvesting on e-commerce platforms like Tmall and JD.com.

Fairchild Studio: How does GED work with brands to empower an omnichannel experience?

J.P.B.: Pre-cross border, brand building was concentrated in a few specialty beauty chains including Sephora where GED built several brands from the ground up in China including Caudalie and GlamGlow. Since the advent of cross border, the customer journey takes place on digital with the last mile experience managed by Tmall and local resellers who deliver to their customers. Recently, with the emergence of online to offline luxury beauty stores, GED is creating a seamless online to offline experience for its brand partners in luxury retail settings.

Now, with the elimination of animal testing, GED will help brands to prepare and position for brick-and-mortar retail. Initiating product registration is the first step in this process. Cross-border distribution allows brands that aren't registered in China to sell to customers in mainland China. Distributors with warehouses within free trade zones in China and Hong Kong sell these brands on digital platforms such as RED, Taobao, and Tmall Global as well as in specialty brick-and-mortar beauty stores that integrate online to offline selling.

Fairchild Studio: What is China's beauty consumer looking for today?

J.P.B.: China's beauty market is fueled by avid Gen Z and Millennial consumers seeking innovation, quality and performance. The Chinese consumer takes their cue from the brand in its homegrown market – be it the U.S. or elsewhere. They want to experience the brand on their terms and in their vernacular. For instance, we help some of our partners customize sets and packaging for Chinese New Year to amplify their cultural relevance.

The Gen Z and Millennial audience looks for a differentiated and authentic



A beauty brand's entry into China means connecting with some of the most discerning and engaged consumers.

“China's beauty market is fueled by avid Gen Z and Millennial consumers seeking innovation, quality and performance.”

Jean-Philippe Benoist
Founder, chief executive officer, GED

Fairchild Studio: When launching a brand in China how does GED build a strategy to maintain its DNA while enhancing cultural relevance?

J.P.B.: Educating on brand story, value proposition, ingredient story and product performance through handpicked KOLs and influencers who decode brand messaging for their micro-communities of avid brand followers. In turn, they generate brand momentum and drive growth on leading social commerce platforms and social media platforms.

Fairchild Studio: To that end, how are the social media platforms in China similar or different than those in the U.S.?

J.P.B.: China's leading social media platforms optimize shopability. As a datapoint, WeChat - China's largest social messaging platform – doubled total transactions in 2020 to \$247 billion in and the goal is to grow this further through short form videos to compete with leading short form platforms like Kuaishou and Bilibili.

To scale sustainably and build brand equity, GED avoids the peaks and troughs of high-octane promotional selling by prioritizing organic engagement over live streaming on Tmall. We help brands set up their own channels on WeChat, Weibo, and RED in addition to driving micro-community building collaborations and activations with key opinion leaders, influencers, and celebrities on leading social media platforms.

brand story with a value proposition based on science-led innovation, a strong ingredient story and performance driven products. They do brand deep dives, extensively researching and reading reviews across multiple platforms as part of their purchase decision making.

Carra Platform Gives Personalized Advice for Textured Hair

The U.K.-based beauty-tech service aims to scale internationally.

BY JENNIFER WEIL

CARRA, a new beauty-tech platform, aims to become the premier destination for personalized care routines for Afro, curly and textured hair, involving expert advice and product recommendations tailored to a client's specific needs.

It's the brainchild of London-based Winnie Awa, who started her career as a software tester at IBM, after studying management and technology.

Growing up in Nigeria, Awa said she was meant to pursue a traditional career, but each one (think doctor, lawyer) was already snapped up by her six older siblings.

"So I was like, 'I'll do computer science,'" she explained.

However, while at Ernst & Young Awa got the itch to work in fashion.

"I was so overjoyed when I got in at Net-a-porter. They were still very much a start-up at that stage, and it was an exciting opportunity to bring my experience there," she said. "You can imagine it was so hilarious when I have to tell my dad that I was leaving the well-worn path of technology consulting to go to fashion. I remember my sister counseling me: 'Just tell him e-commerce.'"

Next stop was Asos and LVMH

Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton. "Again, in the capacity of digital-customer experience," she said. "It really came to a head when I was spending time building really exciting consumer experiences ... but when it came to hair care, specifically my hair care, I just struggled. It was a nightmare — be it in terms of finding the right types of products, services. There was always, as we call it, a k-leg, like an irregularity, somewhere."

That led her to start Antidote Street, an e-commerce platform of curated products for textured hair.



Carra

What was a side gig became an important learning tool.

"It pushed me to learn about other people's experiences," said Awa.

Before the coronavirus pandemic hit, Antidote Street launched a pop-up activation involving an Airstream van giving a "modern-day salon experience" in various parts of London. Personalized services became the most popular.

"People wanted more of that," said Awa, who added data she had culled pointed to that, too. "That led me to start to think about how we can scale this."

So Carra was born.

"The textured hair industry — I like to think of it is the last frontier, the most underserved," said Awa, of what's linked to the multicultural community making up 70 percent of the world's 7.4 billion inhabitants. "There is such a huge chasm between [them and] the amount of knowledge consumers have in the space. And also, many women have been made to feel like they're not worthy or not beautiful because of beauty standards that maybe tell them their hair needs to be straight."

"It was really about reframing that narrative of negativity," she said. "And bringing love into the equation."

Carra users fill out a questionnaire about their hair and are encouraged to share a photo of it.

"That enables us to start to build a picture before they even have their appointment," said Awa.

People connect to a personal, independent hair coach, who understands products and formulations. Users receive their customized hair routine and product recommendations. Carra has an area where that information can always be accessed.

The two packages on offer are priced at 40 pounds and 100 pounds.

Today Carra's coaches are U.K.-based, but they're meant ultimately to be around the globe.

The name Carra, if written with one "r," means "beloved one."

"What we want to leave every single person that experiences [Carra] with is this feeling of love," said Awa.

Bevel Enters Walmart, Adds Products to Hair And Grooming

Bevel is launching at 2,000 Walmart stores this month, continuing the momentum of a positive business year in 2020. BY OBI ANYANWU

BEVEL IS heading to Walmart this month with three new hair products to start the year.

This February, the men's hair and grooming brand will be available at 2,000 Walmart locations in the U.S. and online, expanding its retail reach that already includes Target, CVS, Sally Beauty and Amazon.

The new products, a curl crème and two-in-one pomade for waves and beard, serve the styling needs of men with longer hair and beards, and exfoliating pads aid shaving needs by clearing clogged pores and dead skin reducing the likelihood of ingrown hairs. The products ranging in price from \$11.95 to \$13.95 will also be available on the Bevel website.

Bevel kicked off 2020 with 11

new hair and body products and an experiential event in Chicago during NBA All Star Weekend. Tia Cummings, vice president of marketing at Walker & Company Brands said the new product launch was a huge success, and since then they had seen business grow "tremendously"

"Sales are up over a year ago," she added, with April, May and June being very strong months for the business, especially with grooming products like home trimmers as barbershops were mandated to close due to the pandemic. They also benefited from retail partners like Target and CVS being allowed to remain open at the start of lockdowns. June, in particular, was one of the biggest months for the company.

"Sales in June were significantly higher than previous years," Cummings said. "We had very strong total business growth in 2020 over 2019. We are on an aggressive growth trajectory focused on growing the brand quickly as possible. Direct-to-consumer will always play an important role where consumers can get the full lineup, but we're continuing to grow in retail. Being on the shelf helps."

Bevel also sought help for the Black community during lockdowns and after the killing of George Floyd by the hands of the Minneapolis Police Department. The company supported students of Urban Prep with laptops so they can attend classes from home. They also helped consumers sign up for Headspace for free therapy sessions.

Over the holidays, Bevel launched a new campaign called Created for Kings as a love letter to Black men, and the company is kicking off a new campaign called Dads and Grads to further support the men in consumers' lives.

"Because of all of the good we were doing, we were focused on helping others," Cummings said. "It wasn't about selling more product, it was about helping. As a brand founded

by a Black man and a brand that unapologetically embraces blackness we are very vocal. The fight for social justice had an impact and we made a point to help the community."

She admitted that still many men don't know about the Bevel brand, and they're devising ways to reach new customers. The brand currently uses a 360 marketing approach that includes macro and micro influencers on social media and over the top ads on Hulu and Roku for example. "There is still a lot of runway," Cummings said.

"We're beginning to think about what's coming in the back half of the year and focused on the next few months," she added.

The 2-in-1 Hair and Beard Pomade by Bevel, one of three new products launching at Walmart this month.



Fearless Fund Teams With Steve Madden

Fearless Fund and Steve Madden have come together to provide resources for women of color entrepreneurs around venture capital raising.

BY ALLISON COLLINS

FEARLESS FUND — the first venture capital fund built by women of color for women of color — has teamed with Steve Madden for a program meant to provide more resources and education for women of color entrepreneurs.

Interested entrepreneurs were asked to compete a questionnaire in late 2020 in order to receive free enrollment to Fearless Fund's "Get Venture Ready" program, which is designed to teach participants about corporate governance, product-market fit and pitching. The program selected 50 participants.

"We educate women of color entrepreneurs on venture capital and prepare them to be ready to pitch investors," said Arian Simone, general partner and cofounder of Fearless Fund. Actress Keshia Knight Pulliam and former CPG executive Ayana



Arian Simone, Keshia Knight Pulliam and Ayana Parsons, general partners at Fearless Fund.

Parsons are also general partners at Fearless Fund, which recently received a \$1 million investment from Costco.

"When we first started the venture capital firm and we were raising, we noticed that there was a very big lack of education in the minority space for what venture even is. And we said, 'You know what, as soon as we get this going, we need to make sure that we educate our community on what venture capital is and how to prepare for it,'" Simone said.

Women of color receive less than 1 percent of venture capital funding, and Black women receive .0006 percent, Simone said. "Women of color are the most founded entrepreneur demographic but the least funded," Simone said.

"We got involved in this space, of course, to play a solution and

resolution into the racial disparities. With that being said, it's not just the lack of diverse investments, it's a lack of diverse investors," she said. "The industry is 80 percent white male, and in order for the diversity to take place on the investment side, we need more diversity on the investor side."

Fearless Fund's partnership with Steve Madden includes the Self Made x Fearless Fund Series, where Fearless Fund's portfolio company founder stories will be highlighted across the Steve Madden social channels. Madden will also privately provide mentoring to those companies over Zoom, Simone said. Fearless Fund's investments include Range Beauty, founded by Alicia Scott; Amp Beauty, founded by Angel Lenise, Montre Moore and Phyllicia Phillips; and HairBrella, founded by Tracey Pickett.

Additionally, for Women's History Month, in March, the pair will launch the Walk in Her Shoes Campaign, where one woman of color entrepreneur will share her story and win a fully-stocked shoe closet.

For Simone, who started a retail business while she was in college, providing and education around fundraising for women of color is personal. "I remember what that process to raise capital was like, and I didn't like it," she said. "I promised myself...you don't worry — one day, you are going to be the business investor you are looking for."

Fearless Fund invests in women of color-led businesses seeking pre-seed, seed or Series A financing. The company initially invests between \$250,000 to \$500,000.

Clean Makeup Brand Lys Beauty Launches at Sephora

Founded by Pur Cosmetics alumna Tisha Thompson, Lys Beauty aims to diversify the clean beauty space.

BY JAMES MANSO

FIRST MAKEUP ARTIST, then marketer, now brand founder: industry veteran Tisha Thompson is diversifying the clean beauty space.

Thompson's skin care-oriented makeup brand, Lys Beauty, launched this month at Sephora with seven stockkeeping units. Prices for the clean, Black-owned range from \$16 to \$22, and industry sources estimate the brand to do between \$5 million and \$8 million in retail for its first 12 months.

The products include Higher Standard Satin Matte Cream Blush, No Limits Matte Bronzer, Secure Skin Gripping Serum Primer with 5% Niacinamide + AHA, Speak Love Glossy Lip Treatment Oil, Triple Fix Serum Foundation with Hyaluronic Acid + Turmeric + Ashwagandha, and Triple Fix Translucent Pressed Setting Powder.

The line's hero will be the Triple Fix

Serum Foundation with Hyaluronic Acid + Turmeric + Ashwagandha, as it epitomizes the brand's purpose, Thompson said. In addition to functional ingredients, it is available in 36 shades.

Although Thompson has worked in several areas within beauty, first as a makeup artist for MAC Cosmetics and later in marketing at Pur Cosmetics, she's always had an affinity toward business. "When I used to be in training sessions at MAC Cosmetics, I'd be so inquisitive about how products were made, what made them come up with this collection, and the tactical stuff behind the business," she said. "Then, I always had feedback."

Thompson solidified her desire to launch a brand during her career at Pur Cosmetics, where she gained her expertise in product development. It

wasn't until around 2015, Thompson said, that she thought of venturing off on her own. "When I was getting up the ladder at Pur, I wanted to have full autonomy to create what I wanted. It helped me see it's what I was born to do," she said.

Thompson's time at Pur also solidified her own values in building a brand. "I used to execute marketing campaigns and not see myself in them. You want to be able to have that voice to say, 'What if we use a plus-size model, or someone with deeper skin tones?'" Thompson said. Correspondingly, the brand's name, Lys, is an acronym for the phrase "Love Your Self"

Thompson also gains purpose from the homogeneity of clean beauty founders. "It's staggering to me how few founders of diversity there are, and I wanted to be a leader to bridge the gap and give everyone access to clean




Triple Fix Serum Foundation with Hyaluronic Acid + Turmeric + Ashwagandha.

beauty," she said. With access as an imperative, Thompson said the brand will never price a product above \$30.

Education is another key component of Lys. "If you know better, you do better," Thompson said. "We want to educate people of color on why it's important to use clean beauty products. Educating on ingredients is also important to benefit the skin, and that's uncommon at the price point I'm in," she said.

WWD DIGITAL EVENTS

PRESENTED BY:  Grande Cosmetics



OWN YOUR NATURAL:
Empowering Beauty from Grande Cosmetics

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A CONVERSATION WITH

ALICIA GRANDE

FOUNDER AND CEO OF GRANDE COSMETICS

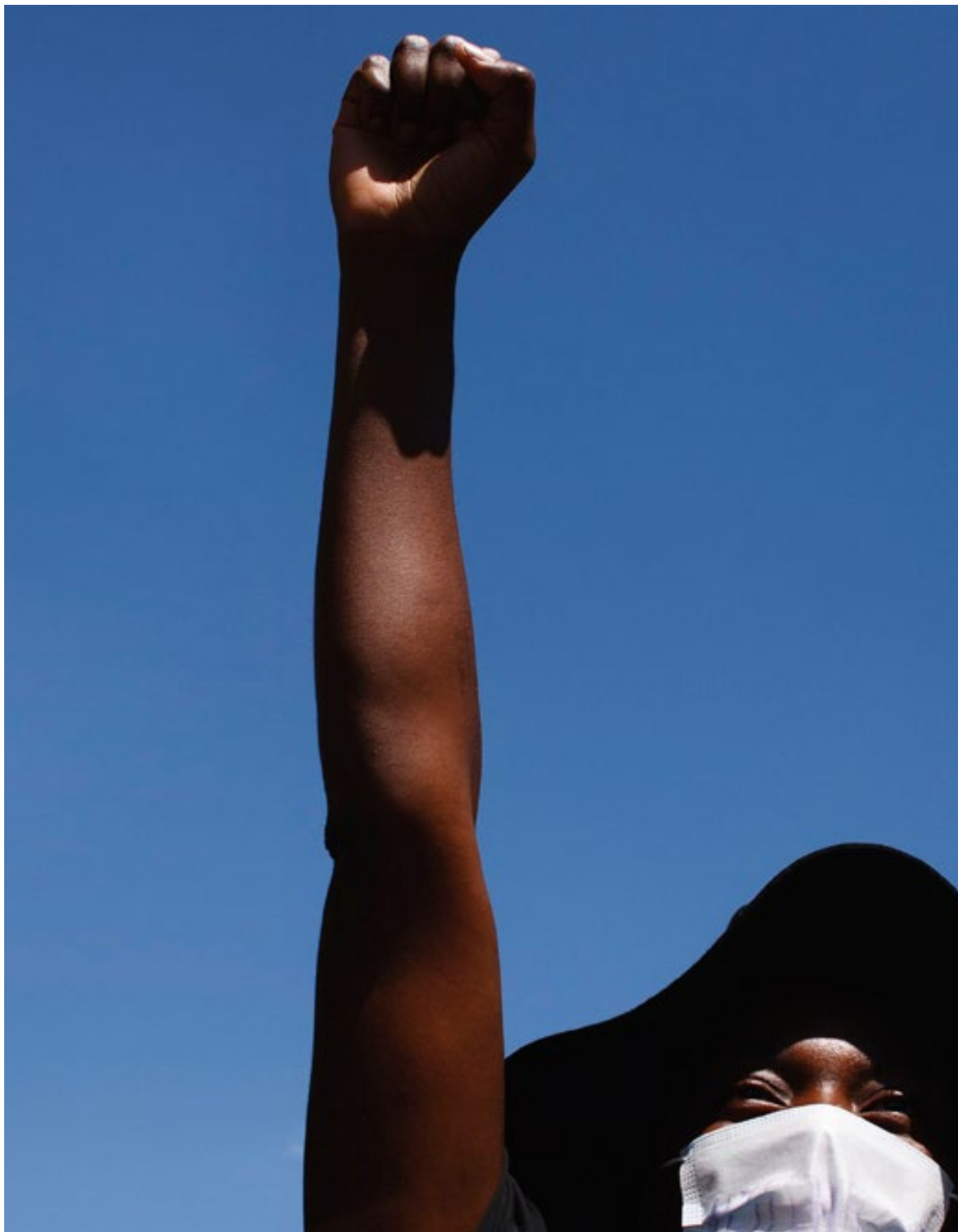


ALICIA GRANDE

Alicia Grande, founder & CEO of Grande Cosmetics, discusses the brand's #OwnYourNatural campaign and its powerful messaging to help consumers radiate unshakable confidence and become the truest version of themselves. Through simple daily habits, one can unlock the inner confidence to achieve a meaningful transformation of self-love and appreciation, amplified by beauty products that truly perform.

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For assistance or attendee questions, please contact **Joy Eisenberg** at jeisenberg@fairchildfashion.com



Here's Where Beauty Stands in Its Progress Toward Racial Equity

In January, WWD Beauty Inc reached out to more than a dozen major beauty companies to track whether internal progress had been made toward diversity.

BY ALLISON COLLINS AND ALEXA TIETJEN PORTRAIT BY DAVID CLIFF

IT'S TIME TO bring transparency all the way through the corporate structure.

Companies should be planning updates for employees, business partners and customers on the diversity and inclusion commitments that many beauty operations promised last summer.

In January, WWD Beauty Inc reached out to more than a dozen major beauty companies to track whether internal progress had been made toward

diversity. For some, it had: numbers of Black employees inched up at the Estée Lauder Cos. Inc. and E.l.f. Beauty; Ulta Beauty reported 4 percent more employees of color, and Coty Inc. now has a female-majority board. Milk Makeup's Black workforce is up to 13 percent from 9 percent in June, and Biossance said it has increased its number of Black employees by 40 percent in three months.

Still, progress at many beauty companies remains unclear.

Diversity inside Unilever, Shiseido Co. Ltd., Revlon Inc., Huda Beauty and Tatcha remained the same, per company-provided data. The following businesses did not provide figures: L'Oréal, Procter & Gamble, Sephora, Glossier, Anastasia Beverly Hills, Kylie Cosmetics and Morphe. Both Sephora and Coty said they plan to release updates midyear.

Transparency is crucial in making progress toward diversity and

inclusivity, experts said. The process will take much longer than the seven months it has been since many beauty companies revamped efforts following the police killing of George Floyd and the swell of racial justice protests, and it's important for companies to keep diversity at the top of the priority list.

"I don't think that you can put a timeline on progress. It has to be a continuous, concerted effort," said Munroe Bergdorf, the model and activist who joined L'Oréal U.K.'s diversity board in June, three years after the company fired her for speaking out about white supremacy demonstrations in Charlottesville, Va.

"The reality is that it's not becoming racially progressive, it's making sure that you represent all kinds of people — and there's lots of different kinds of people in the world," Bergdorf continued. "So when you've mastered one area, you've still got another area to focus on. Instead of looking at a timeline of inclusivity, it has to be a commitment to inclusivity. It needs to be seen as an open dialogue."

Esi Eggleston Bracey, executive vice president and chief operating officer of Unilever Beauty and Personal Care, North America, said via statement that businesses play a "critical role" in achieving racial parity.

"Racial issues are human rights issues and business has a critical role to play in creating an equitable society which is intolerant of intolerance," Bracey said. "As a company committed to addressing social inequality as one of the most important issues facing the world, Unilever believes it is our responsibility to take action to create systemic change and address institutionalized racism and social injustice. Businesses are not separate from society, but integral to it, and we can only prosper together if our society and planet are healthy."

Neal Semel, managing partner at Diversity Matters LLC, said the overall culture needs to undergo a shift toward "we do this because it is good for us" — not "because it is good for them."

Corporate motivation should not be "to get out of trouble," but to understand that diversity is critical to a successful and sustainable business, Semel said.

"Don't do this because it's altruistic, do it because it's good for business," he said, holding up incoming Walgreens chief executive officer Roz Brewer as an example of a leader who acknowledges and improves inequity issues.

"She admits problems, she dialogues with the people who were offended and then she tries to create sustainable longer-term solutions," Semel said, referencing Brewer's work at Starbucks, where she led the company through policy changes and racial bias training after two Black men were arrested while waiting in a Philadelphia shop for a business associate. ▶

Companies are often too quick to become defensive when a misstep occurs, Semel said. “The idea that apologizing somehow is an admission of guilt, we’ve got to get better at admitting when we do something wrong just as a step toward healing. You can’t fix a problem if you don’t call it a problem.

“Starbucks didn’t go out of business,” he added.

Conversations about racial parity are shifting, as companies and consumers see the value in speaking transparently about the topic. Those conversations are taking place publicly on social media platforms and privately, such as in retailer-to-brand founder discussions.

Ron Robinson, the founder of vitamin-C-focused skin care line BeautyStat, said he has received support from new retail partners Nordstrom Inc., Neiman Marcus Group and Saks Fifth Avenue, and that each has offered free email placements or Robinson’s participation in live, virtual events for Black History Month. The retailers have continued communicating with him about how they plan to support the Black community.

“Some retailers do have emails that go out to partners updating them on what’s going on,” Robinson said. “I’d love to have updates in terms of what they’ve done to show their commitment to the cause and the movement.”

Ulta publicly unveiled a plan in February that detailed intentions to double the amount of Black-owned brands in its assortment, pledging \$4 million in marketing support. The company also established a Diverse Leaders Program to give future leaders in the organization CEO and executive mentorship, and appointed activist, actor and Pattern Beauty founder and CEO Tracee Ellis Ross as diversity and inclusion adviser.

“It’s our responsibility that we continue to drive this forward,” said Dave Kimbell, Ulta’s president and chief merchandising and marketing officer. Doubling its assortment of Black-owned brands would account for about 4 percent of Ulta’s overall brand mix. Kimbell said the company plans to continue efforts to diversify its offerings in the coming years and “will update periodically as we move forward and make progress or don’t.”

Other retailers, including Sephora and Macy’s Inc., have committed to Aurora James’ 15 Percent Pledge, which works with organizations to add Black-owned brands to their shelves and to build up a business ecosystem that supports Black-owned companies.

In its “Racial Bias in Retail” study, published in January, Sephora said it would double its assortment of Black-owned brands — it stocks 10 of 327 total brands — by the end of 2021. Sephora revealed this week the participants for its Accelerate program, which, as of last year, is

focused solely on founders of color.

Along with other in-store and internal action items, Sephora said it would establish an inclusivity-based performance metric for employees and expand recruitment and career advancement efforts for people of color in its workforce.

Supporting businesses and potential employees early on is key, according to Semel, who said companies’ mentoring initiatives should be applauded and that they are important to talent retention.

K-beauty business Glow Recipe set up a mentoring program last year that has worked with 54 Thrones, Skin Gourmet and Hama Beauty on scaling their businesses. For the next few months, Glow Recipe’s team will work with Coup de Coiff, Stay Fresh and YGV Collective.

Each mentoring round is tailored to what the mentee needs, Christine Chang and Sarah Lee, Glow Recipe cofounders, said. “A lot of times it’s digital expertise, knowledge about digital ad scaling, very often operations, how to talk to retailers and negotiate and partner the right way,” Chang said.

Companies have also ramped up internal mentoring.

Fabrizio Freda, president and CEO of the Estée Lauder Cos., said the company has created a new leadership development program meant to ensure Black employees have support and advocacy from senior executives, as well as mentorship and career development opportunities.

In June, Lauder established a five-year plan to reach U.S. population parity — around 13 percent — for Black employees across all levels of the business, and that it would double sourcing from Black-owned businesses over the next three years, and work more closely with Noble, its Black employee resource group.

“Last year, we formed a racial equality steering committee,” said Tracey Travis, executive vice president and chief financial officer at Lauder. She is on that committee, which she said leads progress against Lauder’s diversity initiatives. The company also had “greater transparency on our inclusion and diversity information” in its latest ESG report, Travis said. “The employee response is very encouraged,” she said.

Lauder employs 1.4 percent more Black employees now than it did in June, according to a company report from November. Black employees make up 5.9 percent of Lauder’s corporate base, 16.4 percent of its retail base and 15.3 percent of its manufacturing and distribution base. Black employees hold nearly 4 percent of vice president-level positions, 4 percent of director and executive director positions and 6.9 percent of manager-level positions and below in corporate. Nearly 20 percent of Lauder’s board are people of color.

External mentorship can be integral to the trajectory of aspiring

brand founders, though it is not a singular solution, said Sharon Chuter, founder of Uoma Beauty and Pull Up For Change.

“Black founders are very often over-mentored and underinvested,” Chuter told reporters in a recent Zoom conference unveiling her Make It Black campaign.

“Everybody has a mentorship program for Black founders,” she said. “Has anybody ever thought about what happens to these people when they come out of the mentorship program? I can tell you: nothing.”

Chuter’s campaign pledges to deploy between \$25,000 and \$100,000 to Black brand founders via live pitch contests. The effort is meant to combat the industry-wide lack of investment in Black-owned businesses.

Cara Sabin, CEO of Sundial Brands, has spoken with WWD about the notion of community commerce and SheaMoisture’s financial investments in Black women.

“At SheaMoisture, we believe the path to true equality is through economic equity. That’s why we are so focused on centering entrepreneurs, and in particular, women of color and Black female entrepreneurs,” Sabin said at WWD’s Virtual Beauty Summit.

Similar to its “It Comes Naturally” campaign for Black women, SheaMoisture pledged this week \$1 million worth of investments in Black men, along with a docuseries and collection of hair and body products.

The new U.S. presidential administration’s focus on unity and healing has ignited hope among brands and consumers that racial justice will be a priority. Already, President Biden has signed executive orders underscoring his commitment to equity, which could trickle down to the corporate world, Semel said.

Accountability is key, especially as corporations may have been sidetracked by the ongoing pandemic, the mob that stormed the capitol and the election. Semel said he’s hearing fewer conversations in the business community about diversity, but is seeing more job listings for diversity-related executives.

“I’m not seeing a whole lot of forward movement,” Semel said.

Beauty companies should aim for granularity and think through all aspects of their business, including the “far-reaching tentacles” — all the way through the supply chain — he said, and suggested companies be willing to provide updates — even if not all updates are good updates.

“I’m a big believer in transparency — that’s the right approach. At the same time, I’m concerned with how that gets used in the public sphere,” Semel said, referencing cancel culture. “That environment is not inviting for me to share my less-than-glorious numbers if it’s going to be used against me. We’ve got to start

rewarding the transparency.”

As transparency talks continue, all parties — brands, consumers and the media — should remain “solution-based, rather than outrage- and scandal-based,” said Bergdorf.

“The reality is that we’re all moving on different timelines and people do get things wrong,” she said. “Some people do things that are offensive, but the most important thing is that we’re talking about it with a view to change and progress. If we’re caught up on people not getting things right — rather than people getting things wrong and helping them get it right — we’re going to be stuck in a circle of clickbait and outrage. It’s important that we work together, and that brands listen to the people but also that people listen to the brands and allow them the chance to grow and change.” ■

PERCENTAGE OF BLACK EMPLOYEES AT MAJOR BEAUTY COMPANIES

The most recent figures available for the total percentage of employees at beauty companies who identify as Black.

COTY

17.2% Employees Identify as Black

ELF BEAUTY

8% Employees Identify as Black

HUDA BEAUTY

13% Employees Identify as Black

ESTÉE LAUDER COS.

13.4% Employees Identify as Black

L'ORÉAL

9% Employees Identify as Black

REVLON

27% Employees Identify as Black.

SEPHORA

14% Employees Identify as Black

SHISEIDO

10% Employees Identify as Black.

TATCHA

4% Employees Identify as Black

ULTA BEAUTY

10% of Employees Identify as Black

UNILEVER

8% of Employees Identify as Black

The CROWN Act Is Pushing to Protect, And Value, Black Women's Hair

“Hair discrimination is a really critical issue in how racism gets manifested.” BY TARA DONALDSON

IT WAS A CORPORATE training on women's conformity in the workplace that made Esi Eggleston Bracey realize the straightened bob she was sporting was its own kind of conformity — one that saw her shrinking to fit into longstanding norms of “professionalism” that didn't accommodate her natural hair.

But that, she said, “is not OK.” “Hair discrimination is a really critical issue in how racism gets manifested.”

And that's why the executive vice president and COO of personal care at Unilever North America — apart from committing to wearing her hair in its natural state throughout her 30-year corporate career — has a personal commitment to ending race-based hair discrimination by pushing legal protection through the CROWN Act, which is bolstered by the CROWN Coalition in fighting for the cause.

The CROWN — Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair — Act, created in 2019 by Unilever brand Dove and the CROWN Coalition, is a law that ensures protection from discrimination because of race-based hairstyles. It means no one can be sent home from work for wearing braids, dreadlocks, twists, knots or any protective style, a reality Black women are 1.5 times more likely to face because of their hair, according to a Dove CROWN research study done in 2019. It means the 80 percent of Black women who say they have to change their hair from its natural state to “fit in at the office” won't have to. It also means no one can be denied educational opportunities because their hair doesn't meet a non-inclusive school dress code.

“Dove has a life passion as a brand and it really is championing and campaigning for real beauty for women and girls, and that means truly beauty inclusivity, how we can be confident and comfortable in who we are,” Eggleston Bracey told Beauty Inc. “When we look around, that just is not the case. And if you really go deeply into Black women, it's our hair.”

Black women have worn protective hairstyles, like braids and twists, for centuries, endeavoring to keep their coiled crowns from damage

and breakage. It's a look inaugural poet Amanda Gorman recently immortalized with a red padded headband set atop her braids like a crown of its own. And though these styles have been passed down by ancestors and lines that would have long valued their beauty, many Black women have forced their hair, often against its will, into looks more “acceptable” to the Western world.

“When we talked to women, we heard over and over again some horrible, painful stories about lack of acceptance of hair, things our hair were called, torturing our hair to make it acceptable,” Eggleston Bracey said. “We've been at a journey of our hair, that we can love our hair, celebrate our hair.”

In her own journey of growing out a relaxer and embracing the big chop to let her natural hair grow in, Eggleston Bracey said, “It was like freedom.”

“I didn't want to conform. I didn't want to believe that I was just like everybody else. And as an advocate, activist, champion for diversity... I couldn't be the poster child for physical conformity,” she said. “I did it to show who I am but what I got was incredible freedom.”

It's a freedom she wants everyone — anyone — to enjoy.

So far, the CROWN Act has been passed and accepted as law in seven states — California, New York, Washington, Colorado, New Jersey, Maryland and Virginia. California Sen. Holly J. Mitchell (D) was the first to introduce and name the CROWN Act (SB188) in 2019. In late January, the Act passed Delaware's House and is now en route to the state's Senate. Taking things to the federal level, the Act passed the U.S. House of Representatives last year, though it will have to be reintroduced this year and be cleared through the Senate.

“We're really hopeful and optimistic about passing in the House and the Senate,” Eggleston Bracey said. “With that, though, we're still committed to going state by state, because you maximize protection when you have both federal legislation and state legislation. You have from the smallest of businesses, just one or



Esi Eggleston Bracey

“Instead of just highlighting what was wrong, we wanted to make it right.”

—ESI EGGLESTON BRACEY,
UNILEVER NORTH AMERICA

two employees, to the largest of businesses and the best chance of those being covered if you have both state and federal legislation.”

The CROWN Coalition, which counts the National Urban League, Color of Change and the Western Center on Law and Poverty, alongside Dove as its members, has been on a mission to support legislative officials in their efforts to see greater adoption of the CROWN Act. And an ongoing petition designed to urge legislators to vote “yes” on the Act, has made it a “movement of the people,” according to Eggleston Bracey. So far, the petition has amassed 247,731 signatures out of the 300,000 it's seeking.

“We're on the ground and committed. Dove is committed for the CROWN Coalition to just make sure everyone has the right to wear their hair their way without fear and trepidation of having their employment taken away or being sent home from school,” she said. “We inspired a spark with Dove

on an issue that has been there and gave the call to action to help and mobilize, but it is a power of the people. We've got grassroots organizations, we've got legislative officials. Every legislator that's been part of the Act has been a person of color, and a Black person and, disproportionately, Black women.”

While some brands have lobbied for change, Unilever, via Dove and the CROWN Act, has manifested it at a legislative level — which may prove a key differentiator in effecting transformational change.

“Instead of just highlighting what was wrong, we wanted to make it right,” Eggleston Bracey said. With the pandemic seeing legislative states closed, 2020 proved some setback for the Act's legislative agenda, but momentum has recovered. “It continues to give us an engaged platform to talk about it.”

Beyond hair discrimination being “one element of systemic discrimination,” she said, “there are so many more.”

“There's the issue of inequity in health care. Being in the beauty and personal care business, that manifests itself as an inequity in skin care. Fifty percent of derms say they don't get an education or understanding of how to care for skin of color, and today 40 percent of America is people of color,” she said. That's one reason Unilever is “championing for skin equity and ▶



Marcella Cacci, Esi Eggleston Bracey, and Brook Harvey-Taylor

health care.”

As a result of that commitment, Unilever said over the summer that it would make its skin care portfolio more inclusive, starting with eliminating words like “fair/fairness” “white/whitening,” and “light/lightening” from its packaging. The company changed the name of its Fair & Lovely brand sold across Asia, which had long been associated, with skin lightening, to Glow & Lovely. While the shift caught social media backlash for being cosmetic only, Unilever maintains that “Fair & Lovely has never been, and is not, a skin bleaching product,” that it, instead, works to “improve skin firmness and smoothen skin texture — all of which help enhance radiance and glow.”

The company also launched Mel in September, with the aim of offering “science-led skin care, designed to nourish the magic of melanin-rich skin,” according to the brand's website.

On the men's side of the business, Dove Men+Care also announced in September a partnership with the National Basketball Players Association called Commit To C.A.R.E. (Care About Racial Equity) Now to protect Black men.

“Our mission is to change the way the world sees and treats Black men and put an end to harmful

stereotypes of Black men,” Eggleston Bracey said. “We're advocating for the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act that helps eliminate bias in the police and gets rid of harmful chokeholds and a number of other things, so that directly comes out of that, along with showing Black men in all their humanity, the players as husbands and community leaders and not just a super power athlete or as criminals.”

She added, “There's a lot of action that through our purpose at Unilever, we're committed to taking.”

While George Floyd's killing last year didn't quite directly impact the CROWN Act's momentum, it did resurface centuries-old systems of oppression and get more people on board with pushing for progress.

“What I think it did was that it made everyone more woke and it made much more people a captive audience to change,” Eggleston Bracey said. “Because of George Floyd's sacrifice we saw that we could do more on Dove...As we thought about CROWN, creating a respectful, open world for natural hair, we could also stand for no racism, creating a respectful, open world with no racism.”

With that, the Crown Coalition, endeavoring to expand its purview and its impact, developed the CROWN Fund, with which the group has committed to donating

\$5 million over the next five years for the ongoing support of the Black community. It will also facilitate investments in organizations like the National Black Child Development Institute and mentoring program Save a Girl, Save a World, among others, to support their work for the community.

Beyond that, Eggleston Bracey added, “We're evolving...the Dove Self-Esteem Project and we've really supercharged it to explicitly address racial justice and inequities in appearance bias...In this we're

“More and more people are looking to business to take action because of trust.”

—ESI EGGLESTON BRACEY,
UNILEVER NORTH AMERICA

increasing representation of Black voices on our platforms and just continuing to work overall, even at Unilever, at more inclusivity and more diversity in our workplace.”

As it stands, Unilever says 17 percent of its leadership is Black, and among its overall employees, that number is 8 percent.

To bridge the divide between where

the world is at present when it comes to racial equity and where it needs to be, according to Eggleston Bracey, it's going to take greater societal and economic inclusion, for one, as well as ending harmful stereotypes — which the beauty industry can play a particularly critical role in.

“In beauty, we shape those images so we can be responsible for the images,” she said. “And these are issues I think we should address, ending harmful stereotypes.”

Increasingly, brands and businesses are being called on to be driven by a purpose that extends beyond profit.

“If you look at the Edelman Trust [Barometer], it shows that more and more people are looking to business to take action because of trust. They have greater trust in business,” Eggleston Bracey said. Purpose, she added, was the reason she joined Unilever three years back. “Each and every brand has a purpose and, out of that purpose, we take action to be people and community positive and we think we're leading the way for all of business to make that impact because we are rewarded with consumers buying our products. We help them through our products, but I believe we have an obligation to help them with more because we can. And it's through their investment in us and their dollars that we profit, so we should have their communities profit.” ■



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Black Women Gamers Talk Beauty, Opportunities and Challenges

ColourPop Cosmetics, MAC Cosmetics and Urban Decay are among the beauty brands entering into the video gaming sector. BY JENNIFER WEIL

BEAUTY BRANDS ARE just starting to wake up to the lucrative video gaming industry, which has a massive female following.

Within that, various platforms — such as Black Girl Gamers and NNESAGA — have emerged to give voice and support to Black women gamers, a powerful subset.

ColourPop Cosmetics, MAC Cosmetics and Urban Decay are among the brands starting to enter into the gaming sphere, which in 2020 was estimated to be worth \$159.3 billion, according to Newzoo.

In the U.S. last year, nearly 41 percent of gamers were female, Statista data shows. Yet, despite the high proportion of women, gaming is still largely considered a white man's game.

"Gaming mirrors the real world," said Jay-Ann Lopez, founder of Black Girl Gamers. "For a long time, the default in a gaming advertisement was white men. What does that say to the other consumers?"

"It's never been a thing for men," contended Stephanie Ijoma, founder of NNESAGA. "Gaming is gaming, whether you're a man, woman — anything. Growing up as a gamer, I never saw it as being a guy's hobby. I just saw it as something that I loved.

"There's a lot of gatekeeping that, unfortunately, a lot of men do within the games industry," she continued. "I try to ensure that gaming should be an equal playing field for everyone."

Here, some prominent members of the Black female gaming community share insights on beauty brands,

what they like to play and challenges being faced.

JAY-ANN LOPEZ, FOUNDER OF BLACK GIRL GAMERS

Jay-Ann Lopez began gaming at a very young age and began Black Girl Gamers in 2015.

"I started it because there was a need," she said. "I didn't have any other Black women who were my friends who played games. Gaming can be very toxic because there's a lot of non-amenity when the people play. They can say racist and sexist things to you — and get away with it for a lot of the time."

Black Girl Gamers has not only grown to include more than 7,000 members now, but it also hosts events, such as Gamer Girls Night In, created with the gaming and entertainment platform NNESAGA.

"We had beauty brands, gaming brands, women of all different shapes, sizes, creeds, religions and backgrounds there as a safe space, but also a women's gaming event because a lot of gaming events are formed from the male perspective," Lopez said. Sponsors included Makeup Revolution and Palmer's.

Lopez has also cofounded a platform called Curlture, focusing on natural hair and beauty.

"My favorite games have always had a kind of fantasy element or an element of diversity," she said, naming among them: Guild Wars 2 and Mirror's Edge — "because it has an Asian American female lead, and

she's really badass, she does parkour and martial arts. Enter the Matrix is a game that focused on two diverse leads: an Asian man and a Black female. So those were my favorite games back in the day, and nowadays a lot of social games are my favorites. Currently, I'm playing a game called Spellbreak."

Lopez lauded the first Sims and MAC Cosmetics tie-in, when they offered new makeup skins.

"Sometimes, though, brands are

Jay-Ann Lopez



behind the curve what it comes to what creators can create by themselves," she said. "Sometimes they try to offer the official brand thing in a game. It's like we can create this as well. Why do we need to pay for this?"

Lopez suggests brands work with

creators who understand where the market's gaps are. Lopez liked the Levi's x Super Mario collaboration, with customized jackets and dungarees that could be purchased in the real world.

"It was just so cool and fashionable," she said. "Sometimes companies try a little bit too hard. They're not really listening."

Lopez was part of a T-shirt collaboration with Asos' Collusion and Space Invaders, where one could use a Snapchat filter making a design on a T-shirt virtually come to life.

She's partial to Fenty Beauty, due to its extensive shade range. For cosplayers, watercolor eyeliners — like from By Melolops — are key since they allow people to paint their faces like game characters, Lopez said.

"Glossier [Perfecting] Skin Tint is my savior, because I love a glowy look," Lopez said. "And then Milk [Makeup], their Hydro Grip Primer."

STEPHANIE IJOMA, FOUNDER OF NNESAGA

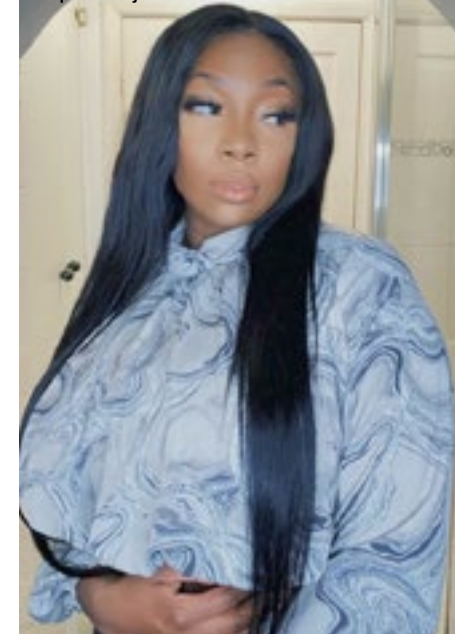
"I have been a gamer since I was four years old," said Stephanie Ijoma, founder of NNESAGA. "Sometimes life is stressful, and you just want to be in your own world. That's where gaming takes me."

In 2015, she created NNESAGA, "to champion diversity and inclusion within gaming," she explained.

"Growing up as a gamer, I never really saw video game characters that necessarily look like me. There were one or two characters here and there, but it was very scarce. My role in this industry is to make sure that we're visible and granted the same opportunities as everyone else."

Ijoma's favorite game is Grand Theft Auto: Vice City. "That's what

Stephanie Ijoma



helped me mold my branding aesthetic," she said. "It really opened a new world when it came to beauty, fashion and music, in particular."

Growing up, she loved Final Fantasy VII, while more recent games Ijoma enjoys are Spider-Man: Miles Morales, starring an Afro-Latino ▶



Kason



Rabbit Plays Games



Briana Williams

character, and Ghost of Tsushima.

Although the gaming industry is making progress, there are still few female protagonists, and even fewer Black female protagonists.

“Gaming should not be seen as one particular spectrum,” said Ijoma, who noted EA Game Changers, such as EbonixSims, have improved the variety of custom content for Sims of color.

“Brands that are now looking at gaming as the new thing, they need to be very careful when it comes to stepping in the games industry,” she said. “The games industry and the gaming community are very protective, because we’ve been on our own for so long.

“A lot of times when you do see beauty brands trying to mix with gaming it’s not done well,” Ijoma said. “That is because there’s not the right people on the team to actually consult.”

Part of her work is to help brands see how to make things inclusive and diverse.

She thought ColourPop’s collaboration with Animal Crossing, involving anime, was well done.

“I’d love to see more Black-owned beauty brands do collaborations [in gaming],” said Ijoma, adding it would be great, too, if some well-established brands, such as Estée Lauder, move into the gaming sphere with their long history of quality and solid audience-building.

She noted Urban Decay has been gifting makeup to some Twitch streamers.

“It gives gamers the freedom to do whatever they want,” she said. “It’s very exciting, and I want to be able to see more of that.”

Ijoma added: “For women in general, and especially for Black women, don’t be afraid to try something different. You are absolutely important and valued in this industry.”

KASON AKA CUPAHNOODLE

Kason, also known as Cupahnoodle, began gaming at about the age of

three, when her five-year-old brother was given a Nintendo.

“Between the two of us, we have owned every console, with the exception of the Sega Saturn and Sega Dreamcast,” she said. “Not matter what I did, I always went back to gaming. Before I knew it, I was an adult — and I was still gaming.”

Today, she is a content creator across various platforms, such as Twitch and YouTube. She was also the first Black woman to host TwitchCon.

“We’re building communities,” she said. “[Games-wise], I’m here for the stories, the challenges. Every game is different. You get to go on really fun rides or immerse yourself in different timelines, time arcs and storylines.”

Kason likes fighter games and is getting into the shooter genre.

“I have fallen in love with Apex, even though it’s mean to me,” she admitted.

Among all-time most adored games include Resident Evil 2, The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time and Parasite Eve.

Kason has noted brands moving into gaming. “It’s new — everyone is trying to find their footing,” she said. “Makeup in gaming is extraordinarily new.

“We play video games, but we still wear makeup,” Kason added, about female gamers. “If we can incorporate it into gaming, it’s pretty cool. I’m here for it.”

It’s key that brands are sure their products have to do with the game with which they’re linking up.

“ColourPop did a really great job with Animal Crossing,” Kason said. “I’d love to see makeup companies collab with gamers, to make different palettes. Gaming as a whole is an untapped market, especially for the beauty industry. You can’t be one foot in, one foot out [or] be lazy about it, because we take our games pretty seriously.”

Kason’s favorite beauty brands include Pat McGrath Labs, Anastasia Beverly Hills, Becca Cosmetics and Milk Makeup.

RABBIT PLAYS GAMES

Gaming has been a lifetime hobby for the gamer called Rabbit Plays Games.

“I grew up in a family that was very big into tech,” she said, explaining that her father was an engineer. “He bought us computers early on — all these different types of video game consoles. It’s something that we all did together, since I can remember.”

Rabbit focuses on retro titles, fifth-generation console and prior, and genres such as Japanese Role-Playing Games and others that are narrative-driven, which provide immersion opportunities.

“There’s just so much characterization, and lore- and world-building,” she said. “I like to be wholly sucked into something. I really enjoy the whimsy of the old-school, narrative-driven video games.”

Rabbit sees opportunities for beauty brands in Esports, such as League of Legends or Dota, when there are all-female teams of gamers who might be sponsored. Also in gaming cosplay or roleplay, where people copy gaming characters’ looks.

“The beauty industry is starting to tap into these various outlets,” she said.

Beauty-wise, Rabbit personally focuses on hair care.

“I really have found myself gravitating more toward inclusive brands that have launched products that are targeting various hair textures,” she said, naming Swag as an example.

BRIANA WILLIAMS AKA STORYMODEBAE

“I have been gaming since I was about four or five years old,” said content creator Briana Williams, known as Storymodebae. “I used to go to my dad’s job, and he would be at his desk playing a computer game. Just watching him play — I was so mesmerized. Fast forward a couple of months, and my parents got me my very first PlayStation, and the rest

was history. I could not imagine my life without video games.

“I really love games that tell a story,” she said. “I love being captivated and transported.”

Among her favorites are The Last of Us, Red Dead Redemption and Grand Theft Auto.

“One of the things that I strive and fight for the most is representation. To play something and see yourself represented on screen is almost life-changing,” she said. “I can maybe count on one hand how many Black women characters you can play.”

She came upon Black Girl Gamers while looking on YouTube.

“I had a hard time finding gamers that look like me,” she said. “That’s what actually got me into streaming in the first place. I was like: ‘I want to represent for all the Black women out there.’”

Williams has noted more of a broad brand drive into gaming.

“It’s definitely been a goal of mine to branch out with brands outside of computers, PCs and games,” she said. “There’s so many brands we use in our everyday life, and while I do love playing video games, I would love to get those other brands included, as well.”

MAC Cosmetics, Urban Decay and ColourPop’s entries into gaming have been on her radar. Sims, she said, is the most diverse game, as it allows users to make modifications to create custom content to either alter game features or introduce their own when it comes, for example, to skin tone.

“I would like to see, of course, more options that work for characters of all colors and backgrounds,” Williams said. “But there has definitely been more of a push to make that change happen.”

Williams appreciates inclusive brands, such as Urban Decay or Fenty Beauty. With a penchant for winged eyes her must-have products include eyeliner, mascara and lip gloss.

“There’s so many amazing women out there in the gaming realm,” she said. “I would love to see brands [used in everyday life] partnering up with them.” ■



Daniella Davis,
Supreme Management



Benzo Perryman,
The Society Management



Ana Jorge, Wilhelmina

Fashion Week's Fresh Faces

● **There's more than** meets the eye with the season's upcoming crop of models. As the industry moves away from un-inclusive approaches to casting, the new season of shows has made room for multifaceted talents. Society Management's Benzo Perryman, for example, doubles as

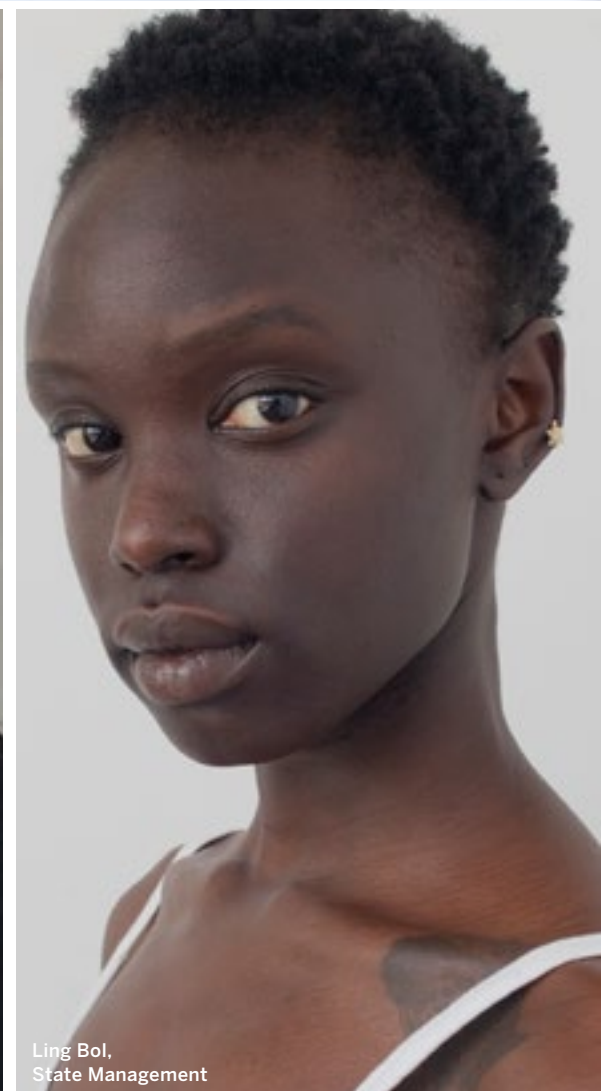
a photographer; and Wilhelmina Models' Ana Jorge recently put presentations for Off-White and Valentino Couture under her belt. Here, see more of the upcoming show season's freshest faces.
— James Manso, with contributions from Luis Campuzano



Sonia Okumu, Wilhelmina



Helen Albornoz,
State Management



Ling Bol,
State Management